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What might be called the colossal blunder of our American educational system in its development during the last half-century is made the subject of an extensive criticism by Professor Sihler of New York University in an article in *The Evening Post* of October 1, entitled *The Elective System*. He emphasizes, as did Professor Manatt in the article referred to last week, the futility of the proposition that different subjects are equivalent in their educational value. He laments the blindness with which the colleges of the country followed the lead of Harvard in adopting the elective system and quotes again the recantation of Mr. Charles Francis Adams in 1906. He explodes the defense of American mistakes by referring to the German educational system and urges very strongly the necessity of reasserting the college ideal. "Let the college", he says, "turn over to the numerous schools of technology those studies and courses that best belong there. Let the college vigorously reassert itself, not as an abortive university, but as a place where the powers and some reasonable *rapproch* with the general records of our human kind are trained to that point where independence of effort is fairly assured for coming life and manhood". He ridicules properly the specious plea that the "cub-period of adolescence" is competent or willing to lay out for itself a proper college course. "Self-determined education is", he says, "if we look closely into the subject, preposterous".

All of this is true and has been emphasized again and again. It is to be hoped that continual insistence will have its ultimate effect. The most difficult point in the whole situation, however, is the attitude of the college authorities in this country, and what we might call the accepted standard of educational success. This standard is a numerical one and the institution which has the largest number of students is the one which assumes the first position of authority—an authority in most cases quite willingly accepted by rival institutions. For a long time Harvard was first in numbers as well as in prestige, but, while it still in the minds of some retains its prestige, so many other institutions have come to rival it in numbers that it is no longer *facile princeps* among our institutions. To the credit of Harvard it may be said that there has never been a palpable striving after mere numbers; but the practice that has been consistently followed

for twenty-five years at Bryn Mawr of making numbers subsidiary to quality and which has always been the announced aim of Johns Hopkins has been conspicuously absent in most of our other institutions of learning. Naturally the attitude of our colleges has been reflected in our high schools.

A college education is still the highest ideal of American youth. Our secondary schools prepare for college, our high schools prepare for college in spite of the fact that a very small percentage of our high school pupils actually reach the goal. Courses of study in our high schools and secondary schools are therefore arranged to meet certain specific requirements on the part of the colleges. There has been muttering and grumbling on the part of the high school teachers and superintendents. More than one has asserted that the time has come when the high school should break away from the college and on the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number should arrange its curriculum to suit the immediate needs of the ninety-five per cent whose education terminates with the high school course. This assertion is nothing but an ineffectual blast of defiance; for the lesson of the past is that the lower educational system must follow the lead of the higher, so that any reform must come from above. Therefore the demand of Professor Sihler that the college cease to perform the functions of the technical school seems to me to be well-founded. If a little heaven leaveneth the whole lump, one must not be discouraged if, when colleges and technical schools are separated, the college falls behind in numbers. It should do so. The college is essentially an aristocratic institution. That culture can be provided by courses in wood-working and domestic science is probably not seriously believed even by those whose commercial interests lead them to advocate it. But the effort of the recent educational movement has been truly American, to wish to assume, or rather to declare, that every one is a gentleman and by implication must have the culture of a gentleman. Since it is obviously impossible for the college in its old form to give this culture, the college must be made to suit the needs of the unlettered majority. The result has not been acceptable even to the majority. Our experience has shown, what study of the past might easily have indicated, that the good does not gain respect by being made common.

Yes, Professor Sihler is right. What is needed in this country is a college whose curriculum is intended to fit its students to become useful members of society, to appreciate the heritage to which they were born, to give freer rein to that part which distinguishes them from the beasts that perish. It is almost needless to say further that in such a college the place of the humanities must always be a large one. Material success has of necessity been the goal of this country in the past but the country has tasted to the full the triumphs of material success. It must now return to the more sober, and, for that reason, more satisfactory life of the spirit.

G. L.

THE GREEK IN ENGLISH¹

. . . I wish to raise and discuss one narrow question—a question which, by the way, was put to me a few weeks ago by a girl who was about to finish her high-school course. She came to me one day and said: “I wish to prepare myself to be a teacher of English. Should I learn Greek?”

The query carried me back a dozen years to a day when I myself, then fresh from college, stood in the presence of the superintendent of a great system of city schools. “So”, he said to me, “you want a job. What do you wish to teach?” “English”, I said. “English”, he repeated. “Don’t you know that anybody can teach English? Can’t you teach anything else?” His words, and still more his manner, nettled me, and I replied, somewhat testily, I fear: “I can teach Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, Spanish, history, and mathematics. I would add science, sir, except that I do not like to be bothered with a laboratory”. He laughed and gave me a job. So, when the young woman asked me, “Should I learn Greek?” I talked to her as I should have liked to talk to that superintendent, putting into my discourse the pent-up enthusiasm of a dozen years of self-renunciation and ever-growing conviction. It is my purpose today to say to you, somewhat carefully and fully, what I then said with unpremeditated zeal to her.

The question, as I conceive it, is one which involves the whole problem of English teaching. This, broadly speaking, embraces practically all aspects of the intercommunication of thought by means of the vernacular. It deals with the pupil’s ability to understand other people’s thoughts and his ability to make them understand his own, together with all of the deep and high questions which a liberal interpretation of these words will warrant. It in-

cludes the reading of books, studies in grammar and rhetoric, the writing of compositions, practice in all kinds of speaking. In order to teach these things aright, one must conceive of them, not as separate and independent phenomena, but as four sides, so to speak, of one and the same thing. Before this essential unity can be understood, the entire series of causes which have made the English language and English literature what we find them must be grasped and mastered. In other words, it behooves the teacher of English, as it behooves the teacher of physiography, to know something about springs as well as something about rivers.

We find, then, that in some vague prehistoric age there began to flow from the same Indo-European fount two linguistic streams. One of these took its course westward along the southern shores of Europe and became in time the speech, not only of Greece and Rome, but also of Italy, France, the Iberian peninsula, and, for a while, the British Isles. One branch of this stream, the Greek, became the highway of the most splendid and opulent literary commerce that the world knew until, two thousand years later, that proud pre-eminence was transferred from Attica to Albion.

The second and younger of these language rivers flowed in a northwesterly direction through the Teutonic forests and along the shores of the German ocean until, having made a peninsula of the continent of Europe, the two branches, meeting once more in Britain, converted that peninsula into an island, thereby furnishing to the imagination a picture strikingly suggestive of the all-embracing character of the speech and the literature which this reunion was to produce. At first, however, like Balin and Balan in the story, if you will pardon a variation of the figure, these linguistic brothers knew each other not. Then, for a thousand years, ensued a struggle—the most interesting, I am inclined to think, in history—of tongues and of ideals. Out of this war emerged a new language; a language to which Asia and Europe, Germany and Greece, north, south, east, and west, the sun and the cloud, the mountain and the plain, the desert and the sea, alike contributed of their wealth; a language alien to no race and equally adapted to the needs of commerce, science, ethics, art, and theology. Is it too much to ask that those who propose to make their vocation the teaching of this language inform themselves as far as they can concerning the elements which have made it what it is?

Of those elements none, except the Saxon and the Latin, are linguistically more important than the Greek and, in proportion as our range of speculation and discovery widens, the relative weight of this Greek contingent increases. Indeed, it is not too much to assert that, in these days of scientific progress, when each hour witnesses the invention of some new comfort or the discovery of some new

¹ This paper was read at a meeting of the Michigan Schoolmasters Club, at Ann Arbor, April 1, 1905, and was published in *The School Review* 14, 390-397. I have long cherished it among my treasures. It seems to me well worth reprinting, nearly in full, in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY*. The teacher of Latin should have no difficulty in making application of Mr. Miller’s line of thought to his own case and in thereby seeing the importance of Greek to him.

C. K.